

O 010715Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5241
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA PRIORITY

UNCLAS BEIRUT 000733

STATE FOR NEA/ELA - LAWSON, NEA/ELA - IRWIN, NEA/PPD, R,
INR/R/MR, INR,
NSC - MCDERMOTT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: Lebanon: Media Reaction - June 30, 2009

Atmospherics:

Media outlets highlighted the Syrian-Saudi consultations that were taking place in Damascus regarding the formulation of the new Lebanese government. The media noted that these Saudi-Syrian consultations seemed more important than Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri's consultations with parliamentary blocks in Beirut. The media seemed undecided on whether these Syrian-Saudi consultations will give Syria back the role it used to play in Lebanon before its troops withdrew in 2005. A number of media outlets seemed apprehensive, while others noted that a dual Syrian-Saudi role in Lebanon will be constructive, remove obstacles, and facilitate the formation of a new government.

Selected Headlines

"...King Abdallah to Visit Damascus" Independent al-Balad

"The Government Between Damascus, Riyadh, and Paris" Pro-opposition Al-Akhbar

"Assad Discusses with King Abdallah's Envoy the Arab Situation and Developments in Lebanon" pan-Arab Al-Hayat

"Saudi-Syrian Understanding Produces Positive Transformation. ...Khojah in Beirut" Mainstream Sunni Al-Liwa'

Block Quotes:

"Syria Will Not Exchange 'Money Capital with Its Interest Only' and Will Not Pay for a Role it Does Not Want," an editorial by Imad Marmal in Arab nationalist As-Safir (6/30):

"If you want to know what is going on in Beirut, you will have to know what is going on between Damascus and Riyadh. This regional formula had an impact on Lebanon before, and it seems that it will have an important impact today. ...It is clear that Saudi Arabia is looking for a Saudi-Syrian dual role in managing Lebanese affairs. Saudi Arabia believes that Syria will be attracted to playing this role with Saudi Arabia, and eventually it will be lenient on issues related to demarcation of the border with Lebanon, Palestinian weapons in Lebanon and other issues. ...Syria, however, is looking at this issue differently. It believes that its current position on Lebanon keeps it inside and outside Lebanon at the same time. Syria believes that this position suits its interests because it makes her look as if it respects Lebanon's sovereignty and independence..."

"The Syrian-Saudi Meetings Compete With Government Formulation," an editorial by Rosana Bou-Monsef in moderate, anti-Syrian An-Nahar (6/30):

"...Political sources say that the visit by King Abdallah's son to Damascus, that was officially announced through the Syrian media,

went into details regarding government formulation in Lebanon.
...These sources believe, however, that it is too early to believe that Syria's conditions and position on the March 14 will change despite the Saudi visits. The Syrians do not give gifts for free...and they are certainly not going to gift to Prime-minister designate Hariri by facilitating the government formulation. ...In contrast, there are those who believe that a positive and constructive Syrian role in Lebanon is a step towards building normal relations between the two countries...and will eventually put the Syrian-Lebanese relations on the right track..."

Sison